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President Shelly Meets with USDA at NAPI Farms

FARMINGTON, N.M. - Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with United States Department of Agriculture Senior Advisor for Tribal Affairs Janie Hipp at Navajo Agricultural Products, Inc. last Friday to discuss the priority of a Natural Resource Conservation Service conservationist to be assigned to the Navajo Nation.

As the Navajo Nation land boundaries extend into Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, the Navajo Nation needs to consider three different policies, procedures as well as different approaches per state with NRCS.

“We need one liaison to be active and consistent with the Navajo Nation. The priorities of USDA should align with the Navajo Nation,” President Shelly stated before 26 people who attended the meeting which include the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture and the Intertribal Agriculture Council.

USDA Senior Advisor Hipp suggested finding a creative approach to addressing the concern as funding is limited.

“USDA is in the business of making it better. There will be a NRCS conservationist meeting with the Navajo Nation more regularly. Let us figure this out. Lets be creative to put more NRCS people at your end,” Hipp said.

A part of the discussion was the need for a Navajo Farm Bill.

“We need a Navajo Farm Bill. Funding for other tribes has been varied and the Navajo Nation has not been in the same field as others. Open communication will open many doors of opportunity for all American people, not only Navajo people,” President Shelly said.

A Power Point presentation from NAPI informed attendees about NAPI products that are available to the general public.

NAPI farms produces pinto beans from more than 7,000 acres of NAPI farmland. The beans are shipped to areas of California, Florida, New Mexico, Arizona and the Navajo

Nation. Small grains, corn and potatoes are farmed on more than 25,000 acres of land as well.

NAPI Products more commonly known as 'Navajo Pride' plans to begin production of flour when they open a flourmill in August.

An investment in the Navajo Nation economy and providing jobs to the Navajo Nation NAPI contributes alfalfa back to the Navajo people for their livestock.

"The Navajo Nation needs more NAPI farms as farming and livestock is a way of life for the Navajo people," President Shelly said.

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